

Democrats seek to impeach Trump

Pressure builds after deadly siege

By **LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and ZEKE MILLER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats laid plans Friday for impeaching President Donald Trump, even as he’s headed out of the White House, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she had spoken to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about preventing an “unhinged” Trump from ordering a nuclear strike in his final hours and days.

Pelosi and the Democrats are considering swift impeachment — as soon as next week — in response to the deadly siege of the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Trump mob that shocked the nation and the world.

Congress confirmed Democrat Joe Biden as the presidential election winner before dawn on Thursday after the violent mob stormed the Capitol on Wednesday in a stunning attempt to overturn the election, undercut the nation’s democracy and keep the Republican in the White House.

One protester was shot to death by Capitol Police. Three other people died from what authorities described as medical emergencies. Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick died after being injured while engaging with protesters.

Lawmakers were resolved to complete the Electoral College tally in a display to the country, and the world, of the nation’s enduring commitment to uphold the will of the voters and the peaceful transfer of power after the mob forced members of Congress into hiding, offices were ransacked and the formal congressional tally of votes was halted for more than six hours.

In the aftermath of the siege, several Republicans announced they would drop their objections to the election, including Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., who lost her bid for reelection Tuesday.

Punctuating their resolve, both the House and Senate soundly rejected an objection to election results from Arizona, which had been raised by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Ariz., and another from Pennsylvania brought by Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., and Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa. Still, most House Republicans supported the objections. Other objections to results from Georgia, Michigan, Nevada and Wisconsin fizzled.

Shortly before 4 a.m. Thursday, lawmakers finished their work, confirming Biden won the election.

Vice President Mike Pence, presiding over the joint session as Senate president, announced the tally, 306 to 232.

The top federal prosecutor for the District of Columbia said “all options are on the



John Minchillo/AP Photo

Supporters of President Donald Trump participate in a rally on Wednesday at the White House before a mob took to the Capitol in an attempt to overturn the election.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SOLE AUTHORITY IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO ORDER THE LAUNCH OF A NUCLEAR WEAPON, BUT A MILITARY COMMANDER COULD REFUSE THE ORDER IF IT WERE DETERMINED TO BE ILLEGAL.

table” for charges against the violent mob that stormed the Capitol, including sedition.

Several lawmakers suggested that Trump be prosecuted for a crime.

Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, under pressure from Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer, Pelosi and other congressional leaders, was forced to resign. Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell asked for and received the resignation of the sergeant at arms of the Senate, Michael Stenger, effective immediately. Paul Irving, the long-time sergeant at arms of the House, also resigned.

Sund had defended his department’s response to the storming of the Capitol, saying officers had “acted valiantly when faced with thousands of individuals involved in violent riotous actions.”

In his first public comment on the mayhem, Sund said in a statement earlier Thursday that rioters attacked Capitol police and other law enforcement officers with metal pipes, discharged chemical irritants and “took up other weapons against our officers.”

It was “unlike any I have ever experienced in my 30 years in law enforcement here in Washington, D.C.,” said Sund, a former city police officer.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser called the police response “a failure.”

Lawmakers from both parties pledged to investigate and questioned whether a lack of preparedness allowed a mob to occupy and vandalize the building. The Pentagon and Justice Department had been rebuffed when they offered assistance.

Black lawmakers, in particular, noted the way the mostly white Trump supporters were treated.

The final days of Trump’s presidency are spinning toward a chaotic end as he holes up at the White House, abandoned by many aides, leading Republicans and Cabinet members. He was tweeting again after his Twitter account was reinstated, reverting to an aggressive statement that his supporters must not be “disrespected” after he sent out a calmer Thursday video decrying the violence.

In the video, Trump for the first time acknowledged his defeat in the Nov. 3 election and announced there would be an “orderly transition” on

Jan. 20, Inauguration Day.

“Even though I totally disagree with the outcome of the election, and the facts bear me out, nevertheless there will be an orderly transition on January 20th,” Trump said in a statement posted to Twitter by his social media director. Trump’s account had been locked by the company for posting messages that appeared to justify the assault on the seat of the nation’s democracy. Facebook and Instagram said Thursday they will bar Trump from posting at least until the inauguration. Twitter announced on Friday that it had permanently suspended Trump’s account.

Trump added, “While this represents the end of the greatest first term in presidential history, it’s only the beginning of our fight to Make America Great Again!”

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said the Trump administration found the siege of the Capitol to be “appalling, reprehensible and antithetical to the American way.”

Pelosi said she had spoken with Gen. Mark Milley “to discuss available precautions for preventing an unstable president from initiating military hostilities or accessing the launch codes” for nuclear war. She said Milley assured her longstanding safeguards are in place.

The president has sole authority in the U.S. government to order the launch of a nuclear weapon, but a military commander could refuse

the order if it were determined to be illegal.

Trump has been making no such threats, and he is to leave office Jan. 20 when Biden is sworn in. But top lawmakers are sounding alarms that the president could do great damage on his way out.

On a conference call, Pelosi said, “We must take action.”

“This unhinged president could not be more dangerous,” Pelosi said.

Biden said it’s up to Congress whether to pursue a second impeachment of Trump, but he expected lawmakers to be ready to move on his agenda as soon as he is inaugurated. Trump said Friday he will not attend the inauguration, while Pence has indicated he will attend.

Pelosi and Schumer have called on Pence and the Cabinet to invoke the 25th Amendment to force Trump from office. It’s a process for removing the president and installing the vice president to take over.

But action by Pence or the Cabinet now appears

unlikely, especially after two top officials, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, suddenly resigned in the aftermath of the violence at the Capitol and would no longer be in the Cabinet to make such a case.

A person granted anonymity to discuss the private call said Pelosi also discussed other ways Trump might be forced to resign. And if he were to be impeached by the House and convicted by the Senate, he might also be prevented from running again for the presidency in 2024 or ever holding public office again. He would be only the president twice impeached.

Conviction in the Republican Senate at this late date would seem unlikely. But it’s a measure of his uncomfortable position that fewer Republicans are speaking out against his removal.

One Trump ally did. House Republican Minority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy said “impeaching the president with just 12 days left in his term will only divide our country more.”

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